SACRED DANCE GUILD NEWSLETTER

V-1

Editor: Margaret Fisk Taylor Athens, Ohio September, 1962

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF FALL WORKSHOPS:

NEW YORK STATE SACRED DANCE WORKSHOP

Date: Saturday, October 20
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Place: First Reformed Church, 8 North Church St., Schenectady, N.Y.
(Directions: Get off N.Y. State Throughway at Schenectady stop 26. After passing toll booth, continue on this road to Erie Blvd. - Washington Ave. intersection. Continue straight ahead on what will then be Erie Blvd., past the State st. intersection, to Union St. (Rte. 7). Turn left onto Union St. and proceed for three blocks to the corner of Union St. and No. Church St. and proceed about half a block where the church parking lot will be found on the left hand side of the road.)

The morning will be divided into two sessions. The first one will be a class in dance technique, led by Mrs. Patricia Peterson. The second session, led by Mary Jane Wolbers, will be concerned with the creative use of dance technique in sacred dance form.

A buffet luncheon of salads, casseroles, desert and coffee will be served. Cost: $1.00 .

Following lunch, over coffee, there will be a panel discussion on the problems of public relations in Sacred Dance. Such questions as "How can we reach out to the community as a whole?" and "What are some ways in which we can create better understanding of and acceptance of sacred dance, not only within those churches which have regularly performing dance choirs, but with the public at large?". (Moderator and panel members to be announced.) There will be time for discussion during which the audience will be encouraged to direct questions concerning problems within their particular situations to the panel.

At 1:30 those choirs which have a piece of choreography to present will be invited to do so for the workshop members and a board of critics.
Note to interested choirs: Please let Virginia Whetten, the chairman, know no later than Oct. 12 of your intention to perform, your needs in terms of space and accompaniment, whether you need tape recorders, phonographs, etc. We will be working in a large hall which does have a stage which you may use if you wish.

After the choirs have presented their works and we have had the discussion by the board

and the membership, the Modern Dance Workshop will present excerpts from their series tracing the development of sacred dance. It is possible that some of the early Christian program may have been partially choreographed by Oct. 20. (This will be presented as an example of how sacred dance is being brought out to the public.)

Following the presentation of the Modern Dance Workshop, Bess Haile will lead the total group in an experience in sacred dance called SPEAK WITHOUT WORDS

We will close the day with a vesper service in the sanctuary.

Registration for the workshop will be $4.00 for non-members of the S.D.G.;
$2.00 for members of the S.D.G.;
$1.00 for students.
Registration for the luncheon and panel discussion will be $1.00 payable in advance. Dance Guild Membership will be acceptable at the workshop, not with the advance registration fee. We hope the majority of dancers will register in advance, but we will accept registrations on the day of the workshop. Come at 9:00 a.m. to register, for we will start promptly with our class at 9:30. Everyone should come dressed to dance.

Data on leaders:

Mary Jane Wolbers is president of the Sacred Dance Guild, a skilled dancer and a dedicated worker in sacred dance. She is director of the Huguenot Dance Choir in New Paltz, N.Y.

Patricia Peterson received her B.A. in dance from Bennington College in 1946. She received her M.A. in dance from Mills College in California where she had a teaching fellowship in 1950. She has taught at Oklahoma College for Women, University of New Hampshire, Skidmore College, and is currently teaching at Emma Willard. Pat has been instructor in dance at the YWCA in Schenectady for eight years. Last year she was instrumental in producing a series of three concerts using the Workshop dancers. These concerts traced the development of sacred dance through primitive, Greek and Israeli dancing. She is currently working on the next of the series, Early Christian Dance.

Bess Haile taught as well as studied at the State University of N.Y. at Oneonta where she received her B.S. She later studied at N.Y. University where she did dance accompaniment with Freida Miller while working for her M.A. Bess studied choreography with Louis Horst. She attended the Sacred Dance Workshop at Jacob's Pillow in 1962. Until this last winter Bess was a leader of the Sacred Dance Choir at the First Reformed Church in Schenectady.

Send your registration to: VIRGINIA WHETTEN - 37 Forest Road,Burnt Hills, N.Y.

Tell her by Oct. 12 if your dance choir would like to present a piece of choreography. Since a luncheon is being planned, send your registration in early.

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September 21 - 23 Margaret Fisk Taylor will be leading a workshop and giving a presentation in Des Moines, Iowa. For details, write to: Mrs. L.L. Ressler, 4020 Ingersoll Ave., Des Moines, Iowa.
September 25 - 26 Margaret Fisk Taylor will be leading a workshop and giving a presentation in Denver, Colo. For details, write to: Miss Iva Wonn, Denver Council of Churches, 1130 16th St., Denver 2, Colorado.

NEW ENGLAND SACRED DANCE GUILD REGIONAL WORKSHOP
Theme: Sacred Dance in Religious Education
Date: Saturday, November 3
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Place: Unitarian Church in Peterborough, N.H.

The morning session will have sessions on technique and on "Symbols".

Lunch: Bring your "nose-bag" lunch; coffee and milk will be supplied @ 10¢.
You are asked to bring some of your costumes to be displayed during the lunch period. Pin information on the costume re: used for what type of sacred dance, etc. The costumes will be hung about the room so that the group may gather ideas.

In the afternoon there will be buzz sessions. "The persons we are asking to lead in the buzz sessions are experienced in each particular interest. Dance and symbolic motion meet just as ballet and modern dance do now. They didn't 25 years ago. We are progressing." (Mary Johnson) Also in the afternoon various choirs will demonstrate variations in sacred dance in religious education.

There will be a closing Vesper Service (3:15 - 4:00). This will be open to the public.

Registration: $1.50 for non-members of S.D.G.
$1.00 for members of S.D.G.
$ .50 for students

Send your registration to Mrs. Warren T. Johnson, P.O. Box 177, Peterborough, N.H. Mary Johnson is chairman of this workshop. Mary has had her training in the dance and speech department of the University of Wisconsin. She is active in religious education in the Unitarian Church. Among the leaders will be Ruth Rayton of Hanover, N.H. She will lead the session on "Symbols".

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Save Feb. 21 and 22, 1963 for the Annual Meeting and Mid-winter Workshop of the Sacred Dance Guild in New York City. Details will be in the next issue of the Newsletter in Jan.

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Ruth Rayton has made initial contact with the directors of the new Hopkins Center of Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H. and we hope the 1963 Sacred Dance Festival can be held there. Proposed dates are Sunday, April 28 or Saturday, May 18. Hopkins Center devotes its program to a consideration of religion and contemporary arts. If held there, S.D.G. will have to make a concerted effort for quality performance and contemporary presentations (both in artistic style and thematic material). It has long been felt that the Festival should be of high calibre and represent the very best work being done. Perhaps 1963 is the year for us to approach this goal. Certainly if we are in Hopkins Center, we can offer no less than the best! The Center will have adequate space for workshop sessions prior to the Festival program. (M.J.W.)

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"The discipline of a dancer is imposed from within, not without. . . . The aim of training is that you can speak clearly, beautifully, and with inevitability." Martha Graham.

For your information - in case you would be considering sponsoring a workshop in your area:

SACRED DANCE GUILD SPONSORED WORKSHOPS AND FESTIVALS

Guild-sponsored workshops and festivals are held at the invitation of churches, choirs, and other groups. Their interest and hospitality are sincerely appreciated.

PROCEDURE:

1. Inform the President of the Guild of your desire to hold a workshop or festival, stating proposed date and any tentative plans you may have in mind. Regional workshops are held in the Fall, usually in October. The Spring Festival is held either the last weekend in April or the first in May.

2. After sponsorship has been approved by the executive board, submit a tentative budget to the Treasurer for approval. (Any adjustment in figures should be sent in promptly - no later than one month in advance of the event.) Send a copy of the budget and details of the event to the President.

3. It is understood that every effort will be made to have the event self-sustaining. However, Guild sponsorship implies that any profit realized will go to the Guild, and any deficit will be paid by the Guild.

4. Study reports of past events to facilitate planning.

5. Write - to make arrangements and plans early. Keep carbon copies of your correspondence. Be specific about expenses. Phone only if necessary. (A collect call to a correspondent may be necessary if he delays response unduly; you should pay for a call caused by your own last-minute procrastination.)

6. Be reasonable about publicity and other spending. In keeping with the Guild philosophy of service, the chief expenditure for workshops should be for adequate leadership.

7. In publicity, use the most current mailing list from the Corresponding Secretary.

8. Supply the National Publicity Chairman with copies of your fliers and publicity, for release to publications, etc.

9. Following the event, send a full report to the President, including financial statement. This financial statement will be forwarded to the Treasurer. A duplicate of the report should go to the Program Chairman for future reference. This report should be meaningful to those who could not attend the event, with accurate accounts of methods and material presented, committees at work, etc.

10. Special instructions for Festivals: Appearance in the Festival Worship Service should be regarded as a privilege and should represent our best efforts. Every attempt should be made to maintain standards of excellence. Choirs and soloists selected should provide a variety and balance in mood, expression, and interpretation. The service should be about one hour in duration.

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Do you keep these Newsletters in a notebook or in a file? These Newsletters give current and basic material for reference. It is not easy to be the editor - and I was just wondering how you might treat this September Newsletter. (M.F.T., editor)

REPORTS ON THE MAY FESTIVAL AND THE JUNE INSTITUTE

The Annual Spring Festival of the Sacred Dance Guild on May 5, 1962 at Hartford, Conn.

Well, we had a good day. The physical set-up was about perfect, leadership adequate, and the choirs responsive and more varied. They seemed to like the idea of voting and it certainly reflected what reached the other participanting choir members. Since other selections were added as needed to balance the service and to fulfill leadership requests for the professionally executed ones - I think both needs were met. Hazel Bailey did a careful job of outlining an order of service and could more spoken words, responses and prayers been added would have been a very effective worship service.

I think we've not been realistic about this service. It has existed and does exist to show off the works of various choirs and this we accepted for the morning presentations - all in a spirit of the purpose of worship. Worship is to God - not a medium by which we approach and/or realize His presence. So - when you aren't trying to make it what it isn't - you can give yourself more completely to following the work of the choir - and this is what we want to do.

In presenting choirs in a worship service - only those which say something valid in a way acceptable and able to be understood by the congregation - should be included. So - any intrusion on the spirit of worship for the congregation defeats this purpose of worship.

Seems to me the Guild's work is to train and challenge and inspire leaders and members of motion choirs and show how it might be used in a regularly accepted worship service in a local situation - (and this we haven't done yet very well.)

The Festival - like a market place, museum or recital is to "show the wares". Don't I sound mundane and horribly secular? I don't mean to, really, for something lastingly good happened within me as I experienced the silent backs of the "Praise", the climax of "The Snowy Heron" (black leotards over which were long white chiffon drapes), the wierd compelling antics of the Tempter, and the urgency of Storrs' plea for mercy, "Kyrie". What may have moved me may have left others cold and so all is valid to have witnessed. Don's poignant remorse was a needed dark touch for all the white robes.

Jean Miller did an exciting job with the teenagers. The West Hartford leader-dancer is excellent and her girls were lovely in the Festival.

- reported by Helen Gray, Hartford.

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The Fifth Annual Institute of the Sacred Dance Guild on June 19 - 22, 1962 on Cape Cod

The Institute was held at the Craigville Conference Center at Craigville, Cape Cod, Mass. The Institute faculty was headed by Mary Anthony, dancer, teacher, director and choreographer, Jess Meeker, pianist-composer and music director. Mary Jane Wolbers, Sacred Dance Guild president and dance educator, taught a session on the use of Shaker materials for Sacred Dance groups. Janet Knight, dancer, choreographer and SDG program chairman, taught a class on technique with emphasis on the use of focus and dynamic qualities.

Jess Meeker played for all classes and gave a stimulating lecture on music for dance. Dancing in a class, blessed with Jess' music, is truly a great joy.

Mary Anthony is a most inspiring teacher. Her approach to a technique class makes one exert every possible effort to achieve one's best. This is the essence of producing an honest and fine choreography.

Both beginners and advanced groups worked on choreographic exercises and everyone did a choreographic study from Ecclesiastes "There is a Time". This was approached with a very exact and demanding control and was done with duet and solos (danceforms).

The four days at Craigville were most rewarding. Movies were shown of works by Mary Anthony and the Martha Graham film "A Dancer's World". The panel discussion on "Terpsichore and Theology" by guest theologians and dancers was challenging and constructive. The participants left enthusiastic and eager to produce their very best works for the Glory of God.

- reported by Janet Knight, East Longmeadow, Mass

A Summary of the class taught by Mary Jane Wolbers at the Institute:

"God has created nothing in vain. The faculty of dancing, as well as that of singing, was undoubtedly created for the honor and glory of the Creator. God has created the tongue of man. He has also created the hands and feet, and enabled them to perform their functions. And shall these important faculties be active in the service of sin and yet be idle in the service of God?"

The above statement sounds for all the world as if it came from a Sacred Dance Guild member defending his right to dance praises to his God. Actually it is taken from a manuscript, "Summary Views of the Millenial Church", written by Calvin Green and Seth Young Wells, two elders of the Shaker Church in 1823. The Shaker dance was used as a spring board for movement discovery and to further our understanding of dancing religious folk. In the class for beginners, the words of three Shaker songs were the basis for improvisation. The group also worked with an invocation written for congregational responsive movement by Mrs. Wolbers.

Beginners are prone to use the words of prayers, psalms, and hymns as the sole basis for choreography. They often neglect to search beyond the words for meaning, or to ferret out the central idea in a piece. Their movement vocabulary is neither extensive nor refined sufficiently to develop a single idea choreographically. In their inexperience and impatience to produce a work, they invariably attempt to ascribe movements to each line (or, worse still, to each word!) of the text. Their efforts usually result in a combination of gestures and literal translations of words-into-movement that amount to little more than charades done to music.

Mrs. Wolbers recommends that inexperienced choreographers and choirs experiment with many different sources of inspiration. In using words, choose forms that were written expressly to evoke a movement response. These include carols (remembering the original definition of carol - "Ring dance accompanied by song", and that carols have been written for all seasons), and folk songs (spirituals, "ring shouts", Israeli songs, Kentucky revival, Shaker songs). In the absence of good materials, try writing some!

Examples presented to the class were from E.D. Andrews' book on Shaker dance and ritual, Carols for the Seasons (Concordia House, St. Louis), Sabbath and Festival Songs for Young Singers (Mills Music Inc., N.Y.) and the original invocation by M.J. Wolbers.

WHAT OUR MEMBERS ARE DOING

Nels Anderson, Minister of Christian Education in First Congregational Church in St. Joseph, Mich., and a director of S.D.G. writes:"During this last year I worked every Wednesday afternoon with a group of mentally retarded children. It was one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had. I have been working with five women of the church for special events. At our first ecumenical youth conference last summer I had an hour and forty-five minute workshop every evening with a group of highschool and college fellows and girls - most stimulating."

Judy Bennett writes: " Senior high youth of the Hudson Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church met at Wappinger's Falls, N.Y. on April 16, for a workshop centered around the theme, "Depth in the Arts". Besides the sessions on "Dimensions of Religion and Art" and "Dimensions of the Spoken Word" there was the session on "Dimensions in the Dance" led by me." Judy is from Sloatsburg, N.Y.

Dosia Carlson, faculty member at Defiance College in Ohio, directed rhythmic and speech choirs at the Joint National Youth Council and National Christian Education Confernece of the United Church of Christ at Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, August 17-24. Volunteer members for the choirs were delegates from joint conferences. During the week, the 62 participants, many of them completely inexperienced, devoted a considerable amount of free time to preparing forthe final worship service.
The material in this service was an original choral reading written for the theme:"The Church, a learning and Witnessing Community". Most of the reading was organized in terms of two speech choirs and two rhythmic choirs responding antiphonally. The script was from the New Testament with musical interludes. A 250 voice choir sang from the second balcony. Off-stage kettle drums accentuated a few of the ideas.
Both youth and adults, men and women, participated in the choirs. Nels Anderson assisted in directing and also performed. Other S.D.G. members among the 4,000 worshippers included Betty Woodbridge and Ruth Loomis.
"Many people who confessed to me their suspicions about rhythmic choir told me after the service that they felt our interpretations communicated a strong message. The material with which we worked was difficult, but I was convinced by the time we finished that I had never worked with any music or scripture which was more authentic in its impact or which had more vital possibilities for rhythmic choir."

Helen Gray tells of her daughter, Betsy, who planned and presented a Vesper Service in the Quaker Meeting House in May. Betsey used her classmates at Earlham College, Ind. Using Psalm 139 -"Their seeking was individually expressed tho carefully prepared - each one had selected certain verses to interpret. Each individual created and blended in the "quest" - a very honest and real way. - - - Betsy has held back this interest in college. Guess she had to be that far removed from her mother before she knew it was her own."

Joan Strickland Johnson of Minneapolis has a baby daughter! She is director of the House of Prayer Worship Choir which contributed to the Constituting Convention of Lutheran Women on July 30. The periodical, Lutheran Women writes: "The Worship Choir will lead the Convention in worship at the opening service."

Jean Kind, who attended the Feb. meeting, came from England to assist in the Creative Arts Workshop (for Episcopal girls) in St. Louis, Mo. The group of 14 girls used a Haiku, the story of Creation and the subject of responsibility. A major work was on Choice before Man - between life and death, heaven or hell. As the drama unfolded with man

enticed in opposite directions and with intensified conflict - it ended with this - Man's dilemma. About this the students were adamant - no choice is made. (The full article on this creative experiment will be in the Episcopal magazine Findings entitled, "Adventure in Creative Living".

Jean Klix, student member from New Paltz, attended the Summer Schoool of the Dance at Conn. College on a scholarship from Mary Washington College where she is a student.

Shirley Porter tells of her activity at the May Pledge Service of the New Paltz Methodist Church W.S.C.S.. The worship center was brought to the altar in the form of a dance to Gounod's "Sanctus". This included the use of a cross and candlesticks. Three members of W.S.C.S. participated in this.

Ethel Rabin's Junior Choir in Sacred Dance participated in the final worship service of the Vacation Bible School of the Presbyterian Church of Westfield, N.J.. The selections included: "Awake, Awake for Love and Work" and "Come, Christians, Join to Sing". The group consisted of seven girls, ages 9 to 11.

Ruth St. Denis presented "A May Festival Program" in the Little Theatre of Adelphi College on May 8. The program included "Spirit of Incense" and "Rhythms of the Liturgy", a dance showing various objects used in both the Christian and Hebraic religious cultures.
Miss Ruth danced "Portrayal of Mary Magdalene" at the Easter Service of the Spencer Memorial Church, Brooklyn Heights, N.Y.
Barbara Andres danced "The White Madonna" on June 2 at St. John's Parish House, Huntington, L.I.

Lynn Sherwood choreographed "Unto Thee My Soul" for the sacred dance choir at an evening service of choral music and dance at Judson Memorial Church, Washington Square, N.Y. on April 14 and 15. The music was composed and directed by Carman Moore.

Elsie Simmons writes of the Sacred Dance Choir of Beneficent Congregational Church of Providence, R.I. where Elizabeth Covill is director. The following were presented in the Palm Sunday evening service of worship: "On Way to Jerusalem" (Maunder), "The Lord's Prayer" (Robertson), "He was Despised" (Handel), "Were You There" (spiritual done by three young men), "Lift Up Your Hearts", "Creation in Reverse" (dance-drama reading), "Sanctus" (Gaul).

Marie Smith has been appointed Resource Advisor for a new phase of the study and work curriculum of the Second Congregational Church (Holyoke, Mass.) called Creative Movement and instituted into the church school at the kindergarten level this fall. Marie also directs the dance choir of the same church.

Robert Storer says that James and Ruby Henderson conducted a week's session on Drama and Sacred Dance at Ferry Beach for Unitarians and Universalists this summer. Bob spoke on Sacred Dance in Scotland to a church group while he was in Europe this summer.

Margaret Fisk Taylor led a group of 12 H.S. boys and girls in four selections in the Religious Arts Festival of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dayton on May 12.
June 24 - 29 she taught Creative Movement at the Christian Education Conference held at Defiance College, Ohio. She worked with children, youth and adults and had a participation evening with everyone moving! Also a special vesper service with creative work. On July 8, the Council of Churches of Dayton sponsored her on a half hour TV program which was

WHAT OUR MEMBERS ARE DOING (continued)

kinescoped. The group from the Westminster Presbyterian Church assisted her.
From July 30 to August 24 Margaret taught at Garrett Graduate School of Theology, Evanston, Ill. There were 9 men and 7 women in her summer school course. It was a marvellous time with opportunity to explore into the many aspects of religious dance. Beside the summer school for theological students, there was a pastor's school for those working in rural parishes. We kept these hundred pastors in mind as we planned our chapel service - to make it simple, genuine and a time of worship for every one - those who moved and those who sat. We used some movement in to processional, "Rejoice, ye pure in heart" and in the recessional, "God of Grace". Our central creative part was entitled:

Acts of Worship Interpreted Through Symbolic Movement

(1) The Act of Individual Dedication (narrator & background music)
"The central fact of religious experience is the awareness of meeting God . . . . This surrender of self at its center gives to the life a new basis for action." (Thurman)

(2) The Act of Relating to Others (narrator and Sonata III by Hindemith)
"The individual must be able to identify himself with his fellows even in the presence of God." (Thurman)

(3) The Act of praying the Lord's Prayer with one's whole being (antiphonal reading)
"The essence of prayer is the act of God who is working in us and raises our whole being to Himself." (Tillich)

On Aug. 23 nine of the Garrett group assisted me in an evening program for the Convention of Phi Beta, honorary speech and music fraternity, held at the Drake Hotel. Fall plans: Sept. 21-23 workshop & program in Des moines, Iowa; 25-26 in Denver, Colo.; 27 at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif.; Sept.30 - Oct. 5 at C.F.O. Conference on Christian Healing (leading rhythms for relaxation) at Asilomar, Calif.; Nov. 9 at Rel. Arts Festival in Germantown, Pa.; Nov. 12 program for Chesapeake Chapter of the Amer. Guild of Organists.

Chrystelle Lee Trump joins the ranks of those who are making the sacred dance their subject of concentration for advanced study leading to a master's degree. Chrystelle, who taught dance at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pa., is working on her degree at the Women's College of North Carolina this year.

Mary Jane Wolbers has been appointed to the advisory board of the Ruth St. Denis "Society of Spiritual Arts", and recently accepted a similar appointment to Creative Arts - Contemporary.
Mary Jane attended the Kirkridge Retreat center where part of the program dealt with "The Dance and Christian Worship". She reports having a profitable and enjoyable time and "as always, I met fascinating people who share my interest in religious dance."
Best wishes are extended to college-bound S.D.G. student members and members of Mary Jane's Huguenot Dance Choir in New Paltz: Judy Babb will enter Wellesley; Judy Robison will enter Carleton College, and Wini Wagner is enrolled in the Philadelphia Dance Academy; and Ann Millonig will enter the Interlochen Arts Academy in Mich.
Mary Jane writes: "The June issue of Dance magazine carried an article entitled, "Sacred Dance Revisited" by Walter Sorell, about the Guild's Feb., 1962 meeting & workshop. It was a fine article and we are grateful for Mr. Sorell's warm interest in our work, as well as the magazine coverage. In good faith, I supplied the magazine's circulation dept. with a copy of our current membership list, having been told that all members would receive complimentary copies of the issue. Please accept apoligies for your president's gullibility. Dance turned this into a publicity stunt and the members were not sent copies except as a tie-in witha subscription deal."

Walter Sorell is teaching a course on History of the Dance at Columbia University, N.Y.C.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

August 10, 1962

Dear Margaret,

I am sending you a letter that I wrote a few years ago (wrote, but never sent) to the Boston University Dance Choir then led by Heather Keene. It is about expression of JOY in the dance - a matter very much on my mind and heart. I do not know whether you would careto make use of it in your September Newsletter. But, in a recent Sacred Dance Festival I was once more struck by the lack of joyful expression in the countenances of all of the young dancers. They were all young, and, if they really meant what they were trying to dance, how could they fail to show JOY? - - - - Well, here is the letter:

Dear Dance Choir:

Why do you rule out Joy? Devotion, perception, thanksgiving, praise, ecstacy - all these you have and express; but why stop short of JOY?

When you dance, interpreting one mood or experience or tragic area of human living, I am with you every moment. You are wonderful in understanding, perfect in technique, evocative, stirring response in the beholder; but, why are you never joyful?

Last night after the service at Melrose (May 21, 1957) someone explained to me that you are taught to be "objective", not "subjective" in your work. . . . But, one may then, as well, immobilize any other feature. Why should you stop short of using the whole person in expression?

I experienced a while ago with you at one Boston U. Dance Vespers - The CIRCLE. From the beginning I anxiously and eagerly watched each impulse toward and away from Community for which, it seemed obvious that humanity must strive. Those last moments when it seemed indeterminate whether or not the CIRCLE could ever, actually, be joined were very tense with expectancy! At last! Ah! They have touched - if only finger tip to finger tip! It is accomplished! And this will be but the beginning!

But - - - then - - - no tightening of the hands; no climax and upthrust of joy: the circle was never really completed! It could have ended with upflung heads - an abandon of JOY; a satisfaction in that finally achieved hand-clasp that would carry over many uncertain days ahead, hard days of set-back, further misunderstandings and breaks. We needed to see and feel the JOY, the overcoming JOY not only in every lineament of your bodies; but in your faces as well - an unmistakable uplift of strength and joyful exaltation! I was left shaken, instead of thrilled at the denouement.

Last night at Melrose we praised with you in PRAISE. At, least, I did. I liked the daring with which the movement was initiated - the strong clapping - praise making its own accompaniment; but it could have been just as well danced on any primitive isle or in some pre-historic cave ritual. Possibly I misunderstand "pagan"; but, I say that leaving out JOY your marvelous expressions of "praise" were pure pagan. That is a characterization, not an adverse criticism. For pagan praise the dance was perfection. But, lacking JOY, which is the characteristic of the Christian expression of religion, it had no need for the setting of a cross-uplifted Chancel.

I know why smiles, including teeth are "out" in religious dance. But a "joyful countenance" seems so naturally to belong with "joyfulness unto the Lord". Does it not? Ask any music teacher if the voice can express lightness and happiness while the face expresses heaviness of heart? Try it yourself; try saying a joyful sentence while maintaining a long face. You cannot do it. You will find out what I am trying to say. It cannot be done. Neither can your message carry without the complete expression of the whole person, which, certainly includes the countenance.

Thinking back to your CIRCLE. You want the beholders to feel the worthwhileness of enduring the struggle if only it can be expected to work out to even partial satisfaction; do you not? But if even hard-won communion, or Community, has so little of joy in it, why bother with all the pain? From a Vesper Service you want all to take away some strength of

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (continued)

spirit to carry over into the problems of the morrow.

And, speaking again of PRAISE - an an ethnological episode in worship, it was perfect. But, to stir and lift praise from our hearts to the God whose effulgence we may behold in Christ, the dance needs to learn from William Tyndale, who, in his Prologue to the New Testament, characterized Christianity as "good, mery, glad and joyful tydings, that maketh a mannes hert glad, and maketh hym to synge, duance and leepe for joye."

(After the Service when groups were milling around in the corridor, I said to myself, noting your happy-faced group members: "So that is what they really look like! And I took heart. Rise, shine! Let not the light that is in you be always on the sombre side.")

Please, would you sit down and "reason together" on this earnest protest?

Most appreciatively and sincerely,

Hazel F. Bailey
74 Sea Ave., Quincy, Mass.

Editor's note: Thank you, Hazel. We can all consider this total expression of JOY at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and in our special services. And in our everyday living.

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June 18, 1962

Dear Margaret,

There are several questions that I have had for some time and I feel strongly the need to discuss them with someone who would understand. I am confused about the Sacred Dance Guild. I am sympathetic to the Guild's desire for professional perfection, but I shall never be able to join the dancers in their dance emphasis.

One problem is this: Much that the dancers find inspirational and get excited about leaves me cold as far as actual worship is concerned. What they do is good dance, no doubt, and and moving, too, but time and again I find myself brought into the presence of God not by their work but rather by the simpler works of groups which thus far seem to receive so much critiæism from the professional. For some inexplicable reason the non-professional group is able to project its mood of worship to me more strongly than the group trained by the professional dancer. At festivals I have found this strikingly true. Ted Shawn in "Every Little Movement" says that the face is the most expressive part of the body, the hands second to it in fluency and articulation. While the better trained groups develop a more interesting and varied choreography, the simpler groups seem to understand this principle: that projection will be primarily through the face. They give me the feeling that what they project comes from the very center of their being - giving validity to the experience.

Concerning Virginia Lucke's group in February; while it needed a change of pattern in the middle, they stirred me more with their "Lord, have mercy upon us" than did any of the others. The directness of their movement had immediate impact upon me. I experienced their "Lord, have mercy. ." in a way in which I did not experience any other feeling of the presence of God with the others.

Is there a valid place in worship for simpler movements? If it is not dance, I for one shall be perfectly willing to call it something else. Should there be some organization

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (continued)

which deals only with the non-professional and his limitations and proceeds on the assumption that, as limited as it is, there is something in it for both the participant and congregation? Does it have to move over into the area of dance - can't it stay on the simpler level?

In the Sacred Dance Guild it is the dance expert who judges a work. There are no ministers to say "This is effective or this is not." Dance experts certainly should judge dance, but I thought we were concerned primarily with worship. I get the impression that the Guild is more concerned about sacred dance as an art form than as a medium of worship.

For some time I felt that I was on the right track, but now I am confused. I feel that I have grown in some directions but not in all. For example, through my own personal experience I have come to find more and more meaning in dance as a way of worship. I can tell you of instance after instance in which in private worship creative movement has brought me into communion with God at times when other ways have failed. For a year and a half I was a member of a modern dance class, and this helped in developing the tool.

But as a choreographer I shall always remain severely limited. I shall never be able to devote the amount of time required to become a real dancer. There are too many other demands for my time, and dance must of necessity remain only a small part of it.

There is another limitation which does not seem to be taken into account by the dancers. Of the total number of girls and young women who passed through my rhythmic choir in our previous parish only two or three had ever had any dance experience. As a non-dancer myself I was limited in my ability to develop them as dancers. Movement always had to remain simple. But our congregation certainly found them meaningful. I think our extreme simplicity and the high degree to which the participants were able to project their sense of oneness with God helped to account for it.

I owe the Guild a great debt for its original inspiration to me, but the joy and sureness I once felt have given way to a state of confusion. So much of what is important and meaningful to me is under constant fire from the professionals. As the Guild goes forward I become increasingly aware of my inadequacies to be doing anything whatsoever in this field. At the same time I cannot ignore the fact that creative movement means a lot to me personally and that it meant a lot to my rhythmic choir and congregation. Can the gap between the professional and non-professional ever be closed? Can the Guild meet both needs?

This is a private letter to you. I know you have a busy schedule, so do not hurry to answer.

Sincerely,
"Confused"

Editor's note: My answer written during my two week vacation - no copy of it - but I stressed the need to work in harmony - unity not necessary. We need to speak out to clarify our various viewpoints in this creative field. I asked if I could quote her letter and below was her answer:

If there is anything helpful in it that you wish to quote you may do so. It doesnot have to be anonymous. In fact, if we are to be outspoken, I believe it is better to be identified. (Editor says her letter seems far more typical left anonymous.)

If worship is "to commune with God", then "thinking about God" may not really be worship.

LETTERS (continued)

Dancing on religious themes makes me"think about" God. But to "commune with" God is something different -- it is a higher level of experience and is not so easily nor so frequently achieved. Much of our sacred dancing is about religious matters. Not enough of it dares to open the self up to the very light of God, to make the power of that direct line of communication really felt.

The highest degree of communion with God involves a center core of "stillness", a point at which all self is put aside and the soul is completely open to God's will for it. "Stillness"and "dance" are almost antithetical, aren't they? One of my greatest choreographic problems is to figure out how to express this tremendous experience of "stillness" thru motion!

My questioning of my participation in the Sacred Dance Guild is chiefly rhetorical since I have no thought of dropping out of the group. I was just wondering if the group was going to grow forever beyond its helpfulness to the simple rhythmic choir and its untrained, church-involved leader.

Again I have rambled , but it has been good to "talk" with you.

Sincerely,
"Confusion Clarifying" (name chosen by Ed.)

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"The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness. . . .
"And even as each one of you stands alone in God's knowledge, so must each one of you be alone in his knowledge of God and in his understanding of the earth." Kahlil Gibran

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"Before the gold depth of the glowing morning
Blithe Francis stood to pray; his praying was
The dance within his stillness and unturning
That stirred and altered his whole being, - -"

from The Mirror of Perfection
by Charles Stoneburner

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BETTY MEREDITH-JONES (excerpt from her talk at the "Consultation on the Dance":

If we are hoping to get people to become fully aware and understand the total wholeness we must help them back to a state of feeling in movement. With many today, among the different age groups I teach, I find a certain irritability if something doesn't "happen". What is important is that we recover the attitude toward stillness and quiet in movement.

If we are going to do anything with this in relation to religion, we ourselves have got to know what we feel. Once we do this - recapture a little of the feeling of who we are and how we express ourselves; only then are we going to be able to begin to relate to these vast areas which are ready for discovery.

Therefore, I would suggest that the language of movement is perhaps a place to start - that we begin by letting people discover this wonderful means of expression, this not with the idea of putting on a show or getting television interested. Rather we should get groups of people together able to feel that they can become a group, even if it takes a whole hour for them to do so in sitting, standing or making simple movement related to life. There are such simple forms such as the relationship of ourselves to total space, what we see and feel in ritual, the most simple language of rising and sinking and the expression of natural attitudes. If people were able to do this with a normal feeling of flow and har-

mony sharing with others, we should have captured something worth while.

But we must first encourage inner quietness and sensitivity, an ability to work creatively on the spontaneity of the moment, and a willingness to wait for things to evolve when the time is right. From this starting place with the right leadership, we could begin to find the true meaning of religious dance.

Ed. note: We appreciate your insight, Betty Meredith-Jones, and hope that you will lead a workshop with the Sacred Dance Guild before long. (She is instructor in dance and language movement, New School for Social Research, N.Y., N.Y.)

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Phillip Saunders, a student at Garrett Sch. of Theology, and a dancer, has presented "Christmas Canticle", choreographed by him and written out by him. In his instructions to those who would reproduce it, he writes:

"Many adaptations will be necessary, depending upon the sanctuary, talents of the voluntary participants, degree of acceptance of the arts by the worshippers and the degree of effort and practice.

Please remember that this presentation was written for the Sanctuary and to be used as a regular worship service, not as a subjective performance for the entertainment of a congregation! If one feels the compulsion to use it as a performance, please be advised to check with the agents of the nearest professional performers, hire them and charge admission at the church door! Get the point? Prepare and present this with a worshipful attitude without concern for a "top-drawer" show."

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The Glenmary Sisters of Christ the King Convent, Fayetteville, Ohio, presented "Alleluia - A Child of Promise" four times on August 12 . This is a Biblical-Choral Drama of the Infancy of Moses by Eusebia S. Hunkins. A sacred dance choir interpreted major portions of the 20 minute presentation.

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JOSE LIMON has said: "In this anguished, terrifying century it is more than ever incumbent on the artist to affirm the courage, dignity, and grandeur of man's spirit in dance. It is the only use to which art can be put, otherwise it is empty."
To his students his advice is: "Accept only what you can use for your own ends. Modern dance is nonorthodox; we are the protestant, the individual utterance. How beautiful it is that each dancer is different!" (from article in Chr. Science Monitor, March15, 1962)

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" . . .Robert Frost wrote: 'The most exciting movement in nature is not progress, advance, but the expansion and contraction, the opening and shutting of the eye, the hand, the heart, the mind. We throw our arms wide with a gesture of religion to the universe; we close them around a person. We explore and adventure for a while and then draw in to consolidate our gains. The breathless swing is between subject matter and form.'"
from "A Swinger of Birches - A Portrait of Robert Frost" by Sidney Cox

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"Our actions would be more creative, more conquering, conquering the tragedy of our time, if they grew out of a more profound level of our life." Paul Tillich

CREATIVE MOVEMENT: AN ART USEFUL IN WORKING WITH YOUTH IN THE CHURCH by Carroll English

(selections from a paper written for a Rel. Ed. course at Garrett Sch. of Theology, Dec. 8, 1961. Carroll has been active with sacred dance at Garrett)

USE OF CREATIVE MOVEMENT IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Creative movement offers opportunities to church people to work and grow in small groups. As these experiences of creating together are shared, fellowship is born and grows. At first there may be antagonisms and negative feelings, as there are in any group which becomes intimate with itself. If there is a climate of acceptance, participants become more free to be themselves, reveal themselves. Then, as they reveal themselves to each other they are willing to share more deeply; this means that they will worship more deeply as they create together and that, in truth, they will express God's love through movement.

"The work of art grows from the overpowering urge to witness to an experience, an emotion, or insight, and lives only if and when it is shared by others" (Nathan: Art and the Message of the Church, Westminster, 1961) In such a group, persons can come together for the purpose of witnessing and for creating. Most people in our culture feel that they cannot create anything; it is left for the artists and the "pros". The church is an appropriate setting in which to help people find the spark of God which lies dormant in them.

Margaret Fisk Taylor points out that the usefulness of this art form in religious education of youth is that it is not an abstraction from life, rather, a vital, instantaneous experience. She calls it "body-soul training". It means that the physical discipline is practiced simultaneously with spiritual awareness. I would go so far as to say that it develops sensitivity; sensitivity to other people in a coordinating group, to the moving of the Spirit, to expression in all its forms, to one's response to God, to the meaning of one's life as part of the corporate life of the Church. The creation of awareness, that is what we want in the church.

In summary, creative movement holds considerable potential for religious education. In it one becomes aware of self and of self expression; there is room only for honesty with oneself and other dancers and observers. One comes to self awareness in the atmosphere of integrity; this climate is necessary for a creative experience and for growth in the Christian life; this the leader and the church must provide. Creative movement offers the opportunity for emotional release which aids the child or adult to learn to be "at home" in his body and the world. Also, it serves us all by bringing a sincere religious experience to the congregation which participates visually in it and in deepening the relationship between the individual and God and between individuals who worship together.

(continued on following page)

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR MOTION CHOIRS: (continuation of Carroll English' paper)

Permit expression of feelings. Most teenagers will become very self conscious and unsure of themselves just before production time. They need reassurance that the leader has confidence in them and has approved of their work. It should be pointed out that everyone feels tension at times like these, but they have something to say which they have worked on and now is the time to say it.

The leader must enjoy movement and work within the framework of the group. Unless he feels free in his own body, the group's members can hardly be expected to be at ease in theirs while working with him. Unless he works with a degree of humility and willingness to hear other ideas and experiment, the group will not become a group, and what they have to say will be conventional, stilted or leader-centered.

Talk about the meaning, the fundamental, rock-bottom meaning of what the work is expressing. This is preliminary if the movers are to be expressing anything, if they are to conjure up accurate and appropriate movement, if the movers are to worship in truth themselves. Integrity comes only when there is real union between the work and the movers. The word becomes flesh.

There are no hard and fast standards for creative movement. Yet the necessity for form in art calls for sensitivity to what is good in movement. Neither formlessness nor overemphasis on technique is useful. One should be "unconsciously conscious" of technique.

CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Creative movement is versatile. There are many levels of it and it can be adapted to the needs of any group. With children it is mostly rhythmic activity, mostly spur-of-the-moment individualistic movement. With young people sequences of movement can be worked out in cooperation with one another. With the older youth and adults there are more artistic possibilities for thought-provoking presentations.

(Editor's note: I selected only three of her eleven points for "Considerations"; these are just fragments from her paper, but we are limited on space.)

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Your editor says she would like any reactions to the Newsletter. What would you like more of? Please send in news about yourself. Use the blank space below or write a letter. The next Newsletter will be out by Feb.1. I need news by Jan.15. Margaret.

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Changes of address for information on publications: Margaret Fisk Taylor 7 Fort Street, Athens, Ohio. (Mrs. Taylor now has a paperback issue of The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, which has been out of print for some time.)

For information on BarbaraMettler's publications: Mettler Studios, Box 4456, University Station, Tucson, Arizona.

Dance magazine is now at: 268 West 47th St., New York 36, N. Y.

Concerning audio-visual materials (pg. 9): The Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches no longer circulates kinescopes of the FRONTIERS OF FAITH and LOOK UP AND LIVE TV programs. Please direct your inquiry to: FRONTIERS OF FAITH - Reigner Recording Library, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond 27, Va. LOOK UP AND LIVE - Youth Department, National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, N. Y.

Film strips directed by Margaret Fisk Taylor, produced by Ruth Lister, available for loan through: Christian Education Dept., Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, 412 Sycamore St., Cincinnati, Ohio; and for purchase through: Dr. Ruth Lister, Route 1, Oberlin, Ohio. "Creative Dramatic Movement" - separate strips for various age groups, 5 through 12 year olds, for use in religious education.

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Status: Dancer . . . . Choir director . . . . Religious educator . . . . other . . . .
(Check categories that apply to you; also state your general - or specific - interest in the field.)
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Have you ever attended a S.D.G. June training Institute: . . . . .
If so, state what year(s) . . . . .
Would you be interested in attending the next Institute?* . . . .
The Institute attempts to meet the needs of its participants. What are your suggestions for leadership, training, program?
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What is <u>your</u> primary concern in seeking training at such an Institute? . . . . . .

We would appreciate knowing the names and addresses of persons you think might like to attend the Institute.
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Do you know that the S.D.G. offers a scholarship to the Institute?
We are particularly interested in assisting male theological school students. Your recommendations would be appreciated.
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* The next Institute will be held in June, 1963. Your answer is an expression of interest, and <u>is in no way</u> a direct committal or reservation for the Institute.

We wish to thank the participants who supported the 1962 Institute, and the leaders who shared their talent and time. Your evaluations are most helpful in planning future sessions. If <u>all</u> members and interested persons would fill out the above questionnaire (including, especially, those who have <u>never</u> attended an Institute) the executive board would gratefully accept your comments, suggestions and constructive criticism and use them in improved programming.

SO, FILL THIS OUT AND SEND IT TO MRS. JANET KNIGHT, 42 Elm St., East Longmeadow, Mass.NOW!

Thank you -

Mary Jane Wolbers, President